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Governor Salutes New Americans Like Shouhayib

by CYNTHIA KMETT

Michigan Governor Rick Snyder told over 700 guests at the New Americans Appreciation Gala last Thursday at The Henry Hotel in Dearborn that he wants Michigan to be the most welcoming state for immigrants to bring their talents to make Michigan better. Among those saluted at the Gala was long-time Troy resident and CEO of The Choice Group, also based in Troy, Kamal Shouhayib, who was lauded for his extensive efforts in the world of philanthropy.

Gov. Snyder observed that this is “a most challenging period in our country for immigrants, but it’s not the first time, but it’s important.” He said we all should feel troubled by this state of affairs. Truth be told, nearly all of us are here today because one of our ancestors immigrated to America.

The big problem right now, the Governor continued, is our lack of civility. We really do need to get along with one another. “We’re the greatest country in the world, but you can’t maintain that status if we can’t get along with each other.”

He called on all of us “to be a role model for what’s right.” Immigrants make everyone’s life better, he noted, citing companies like Dow and Meijer, which were started by immigrants. “It’s time to show that we’re proud Americans and you do that by helping to improve other people’s lives.” He called on everyone to be “louder and prouder.” He asked that we “act as one family, as one Michigan.”

Interestingly, one of the things that makes Shouhayib’s list of philanthropic endeavors notable is the program he started many years ago in the Troy Schools, called “Proud to Be an American.” The theme is new each year as middle school students compete in essay and poetry entries and actual monetary gifts go to the six winners from



THE NEW AMERICANS APPRECIATION GALA at The Henry Hotel honored those immigrants who came to Michigan, including Troy resident Kamal Shouhayib (right), founder and CEO of The Choice Group, who posed for a picture with Governor Rick Snyder with his wife and business partner Yasmine and daughter Sara.

each of Troy’s four middle schools. In the years since he began, over 15,000 students have participated.

“**Success**,” Shouhayib noted, “is being able to do what you really love.” He came to Michigan in 1967 to attend college, although if you’re from Lebanon, northern Michigan must have been quite a shock that first winter. Earning his degree in civil engineering, Kamal headed toward our area of Michigan and has never left Troy.

Other local groups have also been the beneficiaries of The Choice Group’s generous support. They are the long-time sponsors of Leadership Troy’s annual Volunteer Awards dinner where a Distinguished Citizen is named. Shouhayib received that honor himself in 2003.

Kamal is also a passionate Troy Rotarian of more than 35 years, supporting

the efforts this service club does near and far. He was instrumental in bringing his birth city of Aley, Lebanon and his adopted city of Troy together as sister cities. He received the coveted Rotary International “Service Above Self” Award based on his efforts to help to bring clean water to areas around the world, including 1,200 schools in Lebanon. Shouhayib has also served on several boards, including the Boys and Girls Club of Troy and the Troy Chamber of Commerce.

The Choice Group’s efforts have been felt across the Midwest and as far south as Texas. You may well live in a home that’s on land where Shouhayib was the developer. Or, you may do business in a Troy office building that is owned by the Choice Group. Kamal and his wife Yasmine work every day to help keep the Troy community strong.